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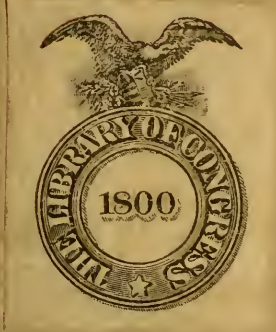
BENEDICT ARNOLD.



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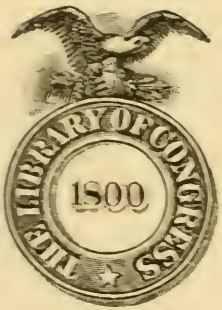

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BENEDICT ARNOLD.

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BENEDICT ARNOLD.

Arnold, BENEDICT, a talented American military officer, whose early brilliant exploits are obscured by his attempt to betray his native country, was born in Norwich, Connecticut, January 14, 1741. By nature reckless and fond of adventure, he ran away from home when fifteen years of age, and joined the provincial troops then engaged in the old French war, but soon deserted. At twenty-one he became a merchant in New Haven. On the breaking out of the Revolutionary war, he joined the colonial forces; accompanied an expedition of 'Green Mountain Boys' (Vermonters), which, under Ethan Allen, captured Fort Ticonderoga; and in 1775, led an isolated detachment of an invading army through the wilds of Maine to Quebec, in the unsuccessful siege of which city he bore an important part. Here he was severely wounded, and for gallant conduct was made a brigadier-general by the colonial congress. Retreating from Canada by way of Lake Champlain, he superintended the construction on its waters of a flotilla, which he handled with much skill at the battle of Valcour Island.

Arnold was of an imperious and violent temper, and was frequently in difficulties with his fellow-officers; and, though greatly admired by General Washington and others high in rank, he appears to have had bitter and influential enemies. In 1777 five of his inferiors

in rank were promoted by congress over his head to be major-generals—a circumstance which may be presumed to have sown the seeds of his subsequent disaffection towards the colonial cause. Though greatly chagrined, he was induced by Washington to retain his connection with the army; and, when on leave of absence he heard of the invasion of Connecticut by Governor Tryon, he hastened to join the colonial forces, and was present at the battle of Ridgefield, where his horse was killed under him. For gallantry in this action he was made a major-general.

In the same year Arnold was sent by Washington to aid in the military operations in eastern New York, and fought with his customary impetuosity in the battles of Saratoga (having his horse killed, and being himself severely wounded), and is credited with having contributed largely by his skill and bravery to the capture of the invading army under General Burgoyne. Disabled temporarily by his wound, he spent much of the winter of 1777–78 in the hospital at Albany, and on the retirement of the royal forces from Philadelphia in the following spring, he was placed in command of that city. Here he met and married the accomplished daughter of Mr Edward Shippen, at whose house the unfortunate Major André (q.v.) had been a welcome guest during Howe's occupation of the city; and through this marriage appears to have begun that fatal acquaintance which resulted in the death of André as a spy, and the disgraceful downfall of Arnold as a traitor.

In 1780 Arnold sought and obtained the command of West Point, on the Hudson River (one of the most important posts in the colonies), which, through a con-

spiracy with André, he agreed to betray into the hands of the British commander. On the capture of André, and the discovery of the plot, Arnold precipitately fled to the British lines, and was given a command in the royal army. In 1781 he led an expedition against his native state, during which New London was burned, Fort Griswold, on the opposite side of the river, taken, and the garrison massacred. After the close of the war, Arnold resided in London in comparative obscurity, where he died June 14, 1801. See the Life by Jared Sparks; and that extenuating his treason, by Isaac N. Arnold (1880).